Moderates Show Strength at OAU

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ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia, Jan. 14—The biggest surprise of the African summit meeting on Angola that ended here yesterday was the cohesion and firmness of the moderate African states, which quickly formed a bloc of their own to oppose recognition of the Soviet-backed Angolan faction.

Also unexpected was their attitude toward the proposed condemnation of South African "aggression" against Angola, as they bargained to have Soviet and Cuban intervention condemned as well.

This development came as a surprise even to American diplomats here, despite the U.S. government's extraordinary campaign to get moderate African leaders to stand up and be counted publicly at last in the face of Africa's militant and increasingly numerous socialist countries.

At the summit's opening, the one issue the two opposing blocs of 22 states each did agree on was "to unequivocally condemn" (in the wording of the moderate resolution introduced by Senegal) South Africa for its military intervention in Angola.

But when the supporters of the Soviet-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola refused to mention other foreign powers by name, the moderates decided to admit openly that they regard South Africa as less an enemy than Cuba and the Soviet Union. "After all, it is part of Africa," remarked one African diplomat.

At least three separate but converging forces were behind the unusual militance of the so-called moderate African states.

The first was the intense fear or suspicion of Soviet subversion and expansion in Africa, shared by a number of French-speaking West and Central African states (Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Chad and Gabon), English-speaking states (Kenya, Gambia and Liberia), and Arab countries (Morocco and Tunisia).

The main surprise was Mauritania, a socialist but pro-Chinese state normally in the radical camp, which voted here instead with the moderates. One Mauritanian diplomat told a Western correspondent that his country was "anti-Soviet" partly because of its current dispute with Soviet-armed Algeria over the Spanish Sahara.

The second force at work here was the network of economic and political ties that South Africa has been busy weaving through its policy of detente with black Africa. It paid off in dividends here that were probably unanticipated even in Pretoria.

At least seven African countries besides Senegal and the Ivory Coast have either long been part of this network or are now being lured by the economic and financial benefits South Africa is offering: Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Zambia, Zaire and Central African Republic.

While all nine of these countries were prepared to condemn South Africa to save face and appease the Popular Movement's supporters, none was apparently willing to do so without the condemnation of Cuba and the Soviet Union as well.

The third force at play was the deep-seated African fear about the possible

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fragmentation of any newly independent black African country — a frightening precedent on a continent of loosely held-together states.

The very real threat of the dismemberment of Angola was certainly an important factor in the attitude not only of the 22 states demanding a government of national reconciliation but also in the ambiguous position of some of the pro-Popular Movement countries, such as Niger, the Sudan and even militant Nigeria, that showed an interest in seeing a compromise.

Other African states in the moderate camp had their own, more specific reasons for voting as they did. For example, little Rwanda habitually takes the opposite position from tiny, neighboring Burundi; Togo's leader Gen. Etienne Eyadema has a personal feud going with Nigeria's new leaders; and Egypt, in addition to its present anti-Soviet stance, is currently dependent on U.S. diplomacy for a Middle East settlement and cannot ignore Washington.

It remains to be seen whether this bloc will hold together over the coming months despite pressure by those African leaders who favor the Popular Movement.

The feeling among many African and foreign observers was that much will depend on what happens on the battlefields of Angola — whether the pro-Western National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which now controls the southern half of Angola, stands up under the expected offensive of Popular Movement forces.

This in turn will probably depend on whether South Africa stays in Angola and on the amount of military assistance, covert and overt, from Western countries such as France, West Germany and especially the United States.

Thus, in the final analysis, it appears that the level of foreign involvement so much feared by those opposed to both the Soviet and the American designs in Africa may well have a decisive influence on the outcome of African diplomacy over Angola and on whether the Popular Movement or a government of national unity emerges victorious there.

In Tanzania's capital, Dar es Salaam, there was a surprise meeting today of the presidents of Tanzania and Mozambique, strong backers of the Popular Movement, and the leaders of Zambia and Botswana, equally vehement supporters of a government of national unity including all three Angolan factions.

That meeting seemed to suggest that the summit talks here convinced supporters of the two sides in the civil war that they must deal with each other now and eventually strike a compromise on supporting and working for some kind of coalition government.

But here in Addis Ababa, a high Ethiopian Foreign Ministry official said his country intends to go ahead with its promised recognition of the Popular Movement government in Luanda now that the summit is over.

Moreover, African and Western observers here saw the possibility that at least a few other African states (Sierre Leone, Togo, Egypt and possibly Upper Volta or Gambia) would follow suit in the coming months.

The Popular Movement's People's Republic has been recognized by 22 African states, just two short of the simple majority of Organization of African Unity members normally needed for the admission of a newly independent country.

But there is a widespread feeling that the entrance of Angola is no normal issue, and that a two-thirds majority may still be needed before the Popular Movement takes its seat as the sole representative of the Angolan people.

Thus, even if the Popular Movement gets the support of five or six more states by the Mauritius meeting this summer, it would still not have the 31 votes required for a two-thirds majority.

But some African diplomats feel that the Popular Movement will have come close enough to two-thirds majority to gain recognition by the OAU in any case.